

# *PRIVATE LANDS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA (PLWMA)*

A PROGRAM REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
OF THE STAKEHOLDER GROUP TO WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH & WILDLIFE



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
GARY LOCKE, GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
Jeff Koenings, Ph. D., Director

WILDLIFE PROGRAM  
Dave Brittell, Assistant Director

GAME DIVISION  
Dave Ware, Manager

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**August 22, 2003**

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# PRIVATE LANDS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA (PLWMA) - A PROGRAM REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STAKHOLDER GROUP TO WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (WFWC) directed the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to conduct a review of the PLWMA program and report back to them on their findings and recommendations. The first trial PLWMA was established in November 1991, when PLWMA 201 Buck run (Wilson Creek) was approved by the Commission. Two other areas, Kapowsin Tree Farm, PLWMA 401 (1992) and Pysht Tree Farm PLWMA 600 (1997) were included in the trial.

WDFW organized a PLWMA stakeholder group in January 2003 to assist in the program review. Representatives from each of the trial programs, five representatives of various sportsmen organizations, two timber industry representatives, three agriculture interests, two professional wildlife biologists and one representative of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission made up the Stakeholder group. Four meetings were held.

The following three questions were the central theme of the stakeholder group work. (1) Should the PLWMA program be authorized as a permanent program having successfully completed a lengthy trial period? (2) Should the current Fish and Wildlife Commission Policy **POL-C6002** (Appendix A) on PLWMAs be amended and should the program be reauthorized as a permanent program? (3) Should the PLWMA program be terminated?

This document represents the recommendations of the Stakeholder group. Altogether, 49 recommendations were formulated, some of which were repeated for their relevance in multiple areas of the program. A summary of twelve primary recommendations of the PLWMA stakeholder group is as follows.

1. A PLWMA-like program should be continued, expanded where appropriate, authorized as a permanent program, be more flexible, and made available to private landowners who wish to work in partnership with WDFW.
2. PLWMA program should be consolidated with other existing private lands programs such as the Upland Wildlife Restoration Program, Road Management, Shooting Preserves, and Public Access (Appendix C).
3. Private lands programs should emphasize “partnerships” and have dedicated staffing and funding to accomplish the program. WDFW Funds will be needed to administer start-up costs and management oversight of PLWMAs. If the program is to be successful, (e.g., expanded in scope and participation) additional staff efforts by WDFW will be needed. This will require programmatic funding, either reallocation of existing departmental funding or generation of new funds dedicated to this task.
4. The name of the program should be changed and shortened to clearly reflect the goals and objectives. We suggest Private Lands Partnership (PLP) program.

5. Commission POL-C6002 needs revision to clearly state the policy and intent of the Fish and Wildlife Commission and set concise goals and measurable objectives for the program.
6. The current guidelines and procedures are not adequate. It is highly recommended that the Department create a PLWMA program standards and guidelines manual that emphasizes achieving a common goal that fosters cooperation, coordination, teamwork, mutual respect and partnership building. The PLWMA Management Plan and Cooperative Agreement must embrace the program standards and guidelines, which establishes the working agreement between WDFW and cooperator unique to the specific project.
7. PLWMA program should provide regulatory certainty (in-so-far as it is possible) to the landowner. The PLWMA management plan is a partnership document that becomes an integral part of the cooperative agreement between WDFW and landowner that should be valid for up to 15 years or more and coincide with the 3-year hunting seasons recommendation cycle.
8. Economic viability of the program is not optional for the landowner, WDFW or the user public. Some low cost or free access hunting opportunities should be maintained through a permit drawing or other process that equalizes the chance that a hunter will receive access to a PLWMA.
9. PLWMAs are best focused on lands that are or might be closed to public hunting and other wildlife recreation opportunities or where wildlife habitat protection and enhancement would be beneficial. A major benefit of the PLWMA program is the conservation of wildlife habitat. Opening of currently closed private or fee-hunting lands to public hunts will benefit hunters on both public and private property.
10. PLWMA wildlife management and public access programs require capital outlay so it is appropriate to maintain landowner opportunity to recoup expenses to accomplish positive public benefits that are agreed to and identified in a PLWMA Management Plan. For the PLWMA program to be successful and attractive to landowners, incentives need to be flexible and financially viable.
11. Provide better public exposure of the PLWMA program through WDFW media sources, marketing plans, and landowners. Place the PLWMA program on the WDFW website. Develop a brochure about the PLWMA program and include instruction about the PLWMA program in the Hunter Education curriculum.
12. Incentives should be reasonable and attainable in scope and funding. PLWMA landowner incentives may include but are not limited to the following:
  - Commission authorized landowner permits for big game that can be raffled, auctioned, sold for access or are discretionarily allocated, however, raffling is the preferred process.
  - Customized limits for upland birds; based on simple, standardized criteria.
  - Customized season length and legal animal descriptions; based on simple, standardized criteria.
  - Free Access Hunts in exchange for habitat work on the PLWMA (Go Play Outside Program).
  - Flexible incentives for cooperatives with adjoining Landowners.
  - Seek to preserve and enhance liability insurance limits for free access providers.
  - Signage and patrolling assistance.
  - Habitat development and technical assistance.
  - PLWMA Wildlife Management Plan development assistance

# **PRIVATE LANDS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA**

## **(PLWMA) - A PROGRAM REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STAKEHOLDER GROUP TO WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (WFWC) directed the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to conduct a review of the PLWMA program and report back to them on their findings and recommendations. WDFW organized a PLWMA stakeholder group to assist in the review process. This document represents the recommendations of the Stakeholder group.

### **WASHINGTON LAND STATISTICS**

The State of Washington is made up of approximately 55 percent private lands, 6 percent Indian Reservations, and 39 percent public ownership (Federal, State and County) (Table 1). The trend in land ownership has remained relatively stable over the years; however, land uses have changed with growth in human population. Urban development has affected land use changes on State, County, Indian, Federal and private lands. Urban development represents approximately 1,107,500 acres of private lands, 6,564 acres of Federal lands, and counties utilize another 343,600 acres of land for roads, airports, parks, etc (Yates et al. 1997). Interstate Highways utilize another 18,470 acres of Federal lands. The lands converted to urban development and transportation total about 1,476,100 acres or 3.4 percent of the total land in Washington.

**Table 1. Land Ownership in the State of Washington**

<b>Land Ownership</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Federal	12,214,836	29%
Indian	2,504,716	6%
State/county	4,013,945	10%
Private	24,072,875	55%
TOTAL	42,806,372	100%

The U. S. Forest Service administers the largest Federal landownership in Washington with approximately 8,645,000 acres and the Bureau of Land Management administers 399,950 acres. Most, but not all, of these lands are open to public access including hunting. All the lands administered by the National Park Service are closed to hunting and about 37 percent of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administered lands are closed to hunting. It is estimated that approximately 23 percent of all Federal administered lands are either closed or not available for hunting (National Parks, Monuments, Interstate Highways, administrative sites, Department of Energy, Military, etc.). The trend in Federal lands open to hunter access is declining.

The Department of Natural Resources administers the largest portion of State/county owned lands, where it is estimated that the majority of the lands are open to public access for hunting except for Natural Area Preserves and Natural Resource Conservation Areas, which are

relatively small areas. Lands closed to hunting in this category also include parks and recreation areas.

## PLWMA BACKGROUND

In the late 1980s, the Washington Department of Wildlife (WDW) recognized disturbing declining trends in wildlife populations, wildlife habitat, and access to private lands. In an attempt to reverse these trends, the Department sought to engage private landowners in improvement of wildlife habitat and public access for hunting. WDW established four guiding principles in developing incentive programs for landowners (WDW 1988):

1. To obtain a net benefit to wildlife,
2. To encourage landowner participation through attractive incentives,
3. To assure that wildlife remains the property of the state, and
4. To allow all recreationists the opportunity to enjoy the benefits.

The WDW developed four proposals to take to public meetings for public input and then to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for final approval and implementation. The four proposals included the creation of:

- Private land wildlife management areas (PLWMA),
- Private lands access coupon system,
- Private lands access and habitat development stamp, and/or a
- Landowner recognition program

There was considerable opposition to the proposals at the public meetings held in Spokane and Mill Creek, Washington. A random hunter and landowner opinion survey (Pierce 1988) also was conducted to determine the concerns and the level of support given to each of the four proposals. The Fish and Wildlife Commission decided in January 1989 that no action would be taken to begin implementation, but that a citizen group be formed and chaired by the Commission Chairman (McGlenn 1991) for further study. In mid 1990, the Commission's report was turned over to the agency for further development. In late 1990, WDW recommended that the Commission take action on the Private Lands Wildlife Management Area component alone. The Commission disagreed and asked the agency to develop a multi component program. As a result, in November 1991, the Commission passed the "Partners for the 90s: Public Resources, Private Lands" proposal that began the implementation of PLWMAs and other activities on private lands.

## PLWMA ADOPTION

The first pilot PLWMA adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission was the Wilson Creek Plan on November 16, 1991. Commissioner John McGlenn (1991) concluded the adoption by saying; *"This proposal was given close scrutiny by agency personnel as well as by landowners and hunters. The program will be carefully monitored and evaluated by the agency and Commission for compliance...If it does not meet the Commission's requirements, the program will be modified or terminated."*

PLWMA 401 Kapowsin Tree Farm was the second area approved by the Commission in 1993. A third trial area, PLWMA 600 Merrill and Ring, was approved in 1997.

It has been twelve years since the first PLWMA trial was implemented. The private land programs and hunter access issues were recently identified in the Game Management Plan with an objective to determine hunter and landowner preferences for private land programs that address landowners' needs and increase lands available for hunter access by 25% (WDFW 2002). In 2002, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission requested a review of the PLWMA program to be presented at the October 2003 Commission meeting.

#### PLWMA STAKEHOLDER GROUP ORGANIZED

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife organized a PLWMA stakeholder group in January 2003 to assist in the PLWMA program review. The following people were asked and agreed to participate:

Terry Hunt – Washington State Grange  
Reade Brown – Professional biologist (retired)  
Angela Stringer – The Campbell Group (Rainier Timber Co) PLWMA 401  
Bruce Smith – Dave Stevens, PLWMA 201  
Kevin Godbout – Weyerhaeuser Company  
Patty Case – Simpson Resources Company  
H. Martin Keilwitz – Western Washington Wildlife Council  
Cliff Barbre – Washington Wheat Growers Association  
Brad Johnson – Washington Wildlife Federation  
Fred Zitterkopf – Inland Northwest Wildlife Council  
Joe Murray – Merrill and Ring Tree Farm, PLWMA 600  
Chris Madsen – Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission  
Mike Sprague – Wenatchee Sportsman Association  
Ken Raedeke – Raedeke Associates Inc.

#### PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF STAKEHOLDER GROUP

The specific purpose of the PLWMA stakeholder group was to evaluate the existing PLWMA program. In the review process the group was tasked to determine whether to continue, modify or discontinue the program, and to develop a recommendation to the WDFW.

The first meeting of the PLWMA Stakeholders was held on January 31, 2003 in Olympia. This meeting introduced the task, set the timetable, and provided the background, history and trends of the PLWMA and similar private lands programs in Washington. A second meeting was held in Spokane, where experts from Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and Utah shared their experiences with private lands access and habitat management programs. This meeting generated a set of key questions the stakeholders wished to answer. At the third meeting (in Ellensburg) the group focused their attention on answering the key questions including gleaning out solution statements for outstanding problems with the PLWMA program. The fourth meeting (in Olympia) focused on completing consensus conclusions, formulating recommendations and reporting of the groups work.

As part of the review, WDFW contracted Responsive Management of Harrisonburg, Virginia to conduct an opinion survey of Private Lands Wildlife Management Area. A telephone survey

was conducted in June/July, 2003 to determine hunters' and landowners' opinions on the PLWMA program. Hunters surveyed were categorized into those that hunted on a PLWMA (PLWMA users), and licensed hunters who may or may not have hunted on a PLWMA but who live in close proximity to a PLWMA (general hunters). Landowners surveyed were categorized into corporate forest landowners, small forest landowners, and wheatgrowers.

## CONCERNS ABOUT PLWMA TYPE PROGRAMS

During the stakeholder review process, several concerns were identified that were not easily resolved within the scope of the stakeholder group tasks.

### Hunter Concerns:

Some hunters hold the view that many privileges and benefits have been afforded landowners who support wildlife, maintain wildlife habitat, and allow public hunting on their lands. Some hunters believe that the WDFW and the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission have exceeded their authority and are remiss in their responsibility to the hunter. They believe that the transfer of control of state wildlife to private landowners (PLWMA) for profit has and will inevitably result in commercialization of wildlife, lost wildlife, and lost hunter recreational opportunity.

They refer to case law, wherein the courts have upheld the exclusive right of the State to control wildlife as a public resource for the benefit and enjoyment of the citizens as a whole.

### Art. I, Sec. 1b of the State Constitution

The State has the absolute right to maintain its game and wild animals upon any and all private land. The state here clearly declares wildlife as "its own". The term "absolute right" constitutes a non-transferable obligation to maintain its wild game as to not allow control of, or any right to control the states wild game by owners or lessees of private land upon which wild game reside.

### 1938 Cook vs. State 74 P. 2d 199,192 Wash 602

"State has absolute power to control and regulate game and other wildlife subject only to applicable provisions of the Federal Constitution."

The court's interpretation excludes any person or person's or other entity other than the state's absolute power to control wildlife. The court's intent is to secure the state's wildlife to the people of the state as public property, and not to be controlled by anyone other than the State. The term "absolute power" burdens the State with total responsibility, none of which may be transferred or relinquished.

### 1958 State vs. Quigley 824 P. 2d 827,52 Wash. 2d 234

"Game is not a property right appurtenant to land, but game belongs to the state, and ownership of land upon which there is game does not exempt the owner from provisions of the game code."

The court expressly and definitively holds that game does not belong to the owners or lessees of the land on which it resides. And that the owners or lessees of such lands cannot set their own seasons, bag limits or game laws, nor can such landowners ignore the laws of the state game code.

1975 Hartman vs. Washington Game Commission 532 P .2d 614,95 Wash. 2d 176

"In view of statement of purpose of the game and fish laws, the regulatory authority of the Game Commission is limited to matters of conservation i.e. preservation and perpetuation so as not to impair the supply of wild animals and birds." RCW 77.12.024

#### Landowner Concerns:

Washington landowners have expressed concerns about allowing public access for hunting and other uses. These concerns have been recognized for many years, but recent closures of timberlands have caused much concern from all recreational users. A recent survey of landowners (Duda et al. 2003) showed that vandalism (31%), littering/garbage dumping (29%), liability (26%), unethical human behavior (22%), and safety (16%) were the most important factors in considering public access onto their property.

#### Tribal Concerns:

Tribal governments have raised concerns about the PLWMA program, particularly on private industrial timberlands. A tribal representative was included as a stakeholder in this process, and other tribal representatives attended many of the meetings. In addition agency staff met with a broad range of tribal representatives in late July to discuss the program and solicit their concerns and ideas. Most of their concerns are about whether the PLWMA is consistent with the treaty hunting right to hunt on "open and unclaimed lands", and with the appropriate role for tribal governments in the PLWMA process. Consideration of tribal hunting rights was not within the scope of this stakeholders group. Other issues included the impact of PLWMA management on wildlife populations in surrounding public and private lands, and the inclusion of some public lands within the boundaries of the PLWMA. Tribal officials also raised an issue similar to some non-tribal constituents regarding the potential for transferring practical ownership of the wildlife resource to private landowners.

#### KEY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The review process identified key questions about the three trial Private Lands Wildlife Management Area programs. The stakeholder group collectively and individually addressed a list of key questions (Appendix B). The substance of our report answers policy issues related to the questions and provides our recommendations to WDFW.

### **1. SHOULD THE PLWMA PROGRAM BE CONCLUDED, EXPANDED OR AMENDED?**

#### POLICY ISSUES

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission developed guidelines for the "Development of the Private Lands Wildlife Management Area pilot program within the framework of the Landowner Relations program" (McGlenn 1991). The guidelines directed that the pilot program would be limited to not more than six participants for up to five years. The trial program started

with PLWMA 201, which has been reauthorized for a total of 12 years. PLWMA 401 has been reauthorized for a total of 11 years and PLWMA 600 has been in existence for 6 years.

- Should the PLWMA program be authorized as a permanent program having successfully completed a lengthy trial period?
- Should the PLWMA program be amended and reauthorized as a permanent program?
- Should the PLWMA program be terminated?

## **DISCUSSION**

Early in the stakeholder review process the group unanimously agreed that there was a continuing need to recognize the key role that private lands in the State of Washington play in the health and welfare of wildlife populations, habitat and recreational opportunity. The focus of the group was directed to finding ways to improve a program and increase its ability to meet the original goals of the program. The evaluation effort was directed to determining what had worked and what needed fixing. Furthermore, the consensus was those relationships among private landowners, hunters and other outdoor recreationists, and WDFW relationships could be improved through a mutually beneficial partnership effort.

When landowners were recently surveyed about their opinions of the PLWMA program, a slight majority (53%) supported the existing program. However, support exceeded opposition by more than 2:1 (21% opposed).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. A PLWMA-like program should be continued, expanded where appropriate, authorized as a permanent program, and made available to private landowners who wish to work in partnership with WDFW.
2. PLWMA program should be consolidated with other existing private lands programs within the agency such as the Upland Wildlife Restoration, Road Management, Shooting Preserves, and Public Access programs (Appendix C).
3. Private lands programs should emphasize “partnerships” and have dedicated and adequate staffing and funding to accomplish the program.
4. The name of the program should be changed and shortened to clearly reflect the goals and objectives. We suggest Private Lands Partnership (PLP) program.
5. The WDFW must also implement additional public access programs like the Wyoming “Walk-In” program, “Block Management” program of the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department, or Idaho Fish and Game Department Access Yes program. Such programs are needed to provide access beyond the limited access of PLWMA-like programs.

## **2. ARE THE PRESENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLWMA PROGRAM CLEAR, CONCISE AND VIABLE? WHAT ELEMENT OF THE PLWMA PROGRAM IN WASHINGTON IS MOST IMPORTANT; WILDLIFE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT OR PUBLIC ACCESS OR ARE THEY EQUALLY IMPORTANT?**

### **POLICY ISSUES**

The goal statement issued by the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Department clearly outlines that the program will preserve, protect, improve, and perpetuate wildlife habitat on private lands and increase recreational access for all wildlife users (McGlenn 1991).

The Washington Department of Wildlife's, "Landowner Incentive Proposal" stated, "Wildlife, habitat and access to private lands in Washington have declined dramatically in the last ten years. As a step to reverse this trend, the Department of Wildlife is examining options to encourage landowners to improve wildlife habitat and allow more public access." This general theme was carried forward in the developmental and implementation phase of the PLWMA program.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission issued policy decision POL-C6002 on December 6, 1996 reinforcing the goal of protecting and enhancing wildlife habitat and public access onto private lands.

- Are the program goals and objectives clearly stated?
- Are the program goals and objectives measurable and achievable?
- Are there additional goals and objectives that are missing?

### **DISCUSSION**

The group found that the goals of the Private Lands Wildlife Management Area program are clear; however, the objectives are not as well defined and are frequently not measurable. The viability of the program depends on a clearly defined process that identifies standards and guidelines to measure success of the program along with program support and guidance from all levels of WDFW.

Habitat enhancement and public access are, generally, equally important. Some believe that habitat enhancement must come before access but this will depend on the wildlife populations and habitat conditions of each specific landowner participant. Some believe that the private landowners' choice of allowing public recreational access is under-appreciated by hunters and the public.

A recent Washington hunter survey (Duda et al. 2002b) was conducted of deer, elk, pheasant, turkey and waterfowl hunters who hunted in 2000. They were asked the following questions.

*“Do you agree or disagree that private lands programs should provide incentives to landowners in exchange for access onto their lands for outdoor recreation?”* All categories of hunters agreed with this statement (69% - 79%).

*“Do you agree or disagree that private lands programs should provide incentives to landowners in exchange for improvement of wildlife habitat on their lands?”* All categories of hunters agreed with this statement (76% - 87%).

With the exception of bear-cougar hunters, all expressed a stronger opinion for wildlife habitat improvement over providing access.

A more recent survey of Washington State Hunters’ and Landowners’ Opinions on the PLWMA Program conducted by Responsive Management (Duda et al. 2003) indicated a majority of general hunters (79%) strongly or moderately agreed that the PLWMA program is worthwhile. The reason they thought that the program is worthwhile is that many private lands would not otherwise allow hunter access. On the other hand, the most common reason that respondents who disagreed (8 %) thought that the PLWMA program is not worthwhile because the program will turn hunting into a rich man’s sport (41%), that the program privatizes public wildlife (24%), that it is commercialization of wildlife (7%), or that landowner has too much control over hunting seasons (7%).

A majority (72%) of PLWMA users (people who actually hunted on PLWMA) were very or somewhat satisfied with their experience hunting on PLWMAs, with those very satisfied (41%) outnumbering those somewhat satisfied (31%). Those who were dissatisfied with their hunting experience on PLWMAs most commonly said they were dissatisfied because there was not enough game (41%), followed by poor access (16%), access fee being too costly (14%), and that landowner cooperation did not meet hunter’s expectations (14%).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

6. The goals and objectives are not clearly understood by the public and/or personnel of WDFW. Significant differences in wildlife habitat and potential wildlife populations and management practices affect achieving habitat and access objectives; therefore, management goals and objectives must be applied uniquely to each property.
7. Commission POL-C6002 needs revision to clearly state the policy and intent of the Fish and Wildlife Commission and set concise goals and measurable objectives for the program.
8. Develop a public (hunters, landowners, agency personnel) education program about the private lands wildlife, habitat, and access programs.
9. Ensure that each cooperator’s management plan is designed to meet the dual objectives of providing expanded wildlife recreation opportunities (quality and quantity) and site-specific management of wildlife habitat and populations.

## **3. ARE THE CURRENT GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES INCLUDING CRITERIA FOR ENROLLING IN THE PLWMA PROGRAM SUFFICIENT?**

## **POLICY ISSUES**

Written guidelines were established at the onset of the PLWMA program and amended several times. The September 23, 1991 “Partners for the 90s:Public Resources, Private Lands” document outlined eleven guidelines. The Washington Wildlife Commission issued a paper entitled, “Development of the Private Lands Wildlife Management Area Pilot Program within the Framework of the Landowner Relations Program” (McGlenn 1991) that listed ten guidelines. “The Partners for the 90s: Public Resources, Private Lands” document was amended on September 16, 1992 listing thirteen guidelines. In addition, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission under Policy POL-C6002 established fourteen standards and guidelines for the program.

- Are the standards and guidelines established to administer the trial PLWMA program concise, understandable and helpful?
- Are the standards and guidelines established to administer the trial PLWMA program agreeable to the landowner cooperator?

## **DISCUSSION**

During the lengthy trial of the PLWMAs the written standards and guidelines were changed and interpreted differently causing some confusion and disagreement between the cooperators and WDFW. In review, the stakeholders agreed that administration of a complex PLWMA program requires that specific standards and guidelines be followed. PLWMA cooperators agreed but also requested flexibility and simplicity in the program.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

10. The current guidelines and procedures are not adequate. Create a PLWMA program standards and guidelines manual that emphasizes achieving a common goal that fosters cooperation, coordination, teamwork, mutual respect and partnership building (Same as recommendation 5).
11. The interaction between WDFW and landowners should emphasize a partnership to ensure success. Guidelines and procedures should be part of the PLWMA agreement.
12. Development of a site-specific PLWMA Management Plan is key and should include clear and measurable outcomes that focus on enhancement of habitat, wildlife population management, and recreational access.
13. Greater flexibility is needed in PLWMA Management Plans.
14. Repeal minimum acreage requirement and use new biological and logistical application criteria.

## **4. ARE THE THREE TRIAL PLWMAs ACHIEVING THE OVERALL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM AS ORIGINALLY STATED?**

## **POLICY ISSUES**

The Private Lands program goals and objectives should be clear and concisely stated.

- Is the goal statement established for the trial PLWMA clear and does it accurately reflect the management philosophies of the program as presented in the Partners for the 90s: Public Resources, Private Lands initiative?
- Are the objectives established for the trial PLWMA program clearly displayed with specific outputs and accomplishments to be made?
- Are the objectives realistic, achievable and measurable?

## **DISCUSSION**

Sometimes there is confusion about the definition of a goal versus an objective. A goal is defined as the management philosophies within which measurable objectives will be pursued. Objectives function as targets for measuring program success. Therefore, objectives must be specific and measurable to be useful (Crowe 1983).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

15. A PLWMA manual (same as recommendation 10) should be developed to guide agency and cooperators in achieving program goals and objectives. The potential benefits of a PLWMA are linked to the creativity and thoroughness of the management plan.
16. PLWMA landowner recognition has not been realized. The WDFW should frequently recognize PLWMA landowners who have contributed to wildlife conservation.
17. Insure PLWMA program goals and objectives are clear, concise and flexible enough to help cooperators achieve the goals and objectives. Recreational access has been provided by the trial PLWMAs; however, wildlife population management objectives on a PLWMA are sometimes difficult to measure.
18. Develop and disseminate PLWMA educational materials that describe the overall program, goals, and objectives. Public support of the PLWMA program may have been compromised because of a lack of information, lack of commitment from WDFW staff, and a lack of understanding of what the program is or is not.
19. PLWMAs should offer a diversity of wildlife recreational opportunities.

## **5. AS YOU SEE IT, WHAT ARE THE MAJOR PROBLEMS WITH THE PLWMA PROGRAM AS IT IS CURRENTLY STRUCTURED?**

## **POLICY ISSUES**

Are the current PLWMA guidelines too complex and inflexible?

- Is the WDFW expecting too much from the PLWMA landowner cooperators?
- Are the PLWMA cooperators expecting too much from WDFW and the public?

- Is the PLWMA program just another resource allocation issue?
- Is the WDFW giving away the authority to manage wildlife?
- Is the WDFW authorizing the sale of wildlife through the PLWMA program?

## **DISCUSSION**

Four general themes surfaced concerning problems with the trial PLWMAs. A minority, but strong opinion, held to the belief that the program was abdicating the authority of the State to manage wildlife, a public resource. There was also a minority opinion that providing incentives to the landowner would commercialize the public resource and turn hunting into an exclusive opportunity for the wealthy.

The majority felt that economic incentives to the landowner was justified to help pay for expenses to the landowner who provides access and improves wildlife habitat. In this regard, at least one existing PLWMA cooperator requested long-term agreements of 15 or more years.

As a result of the workshop held on other States private lands habitat development and hunter access programs, visiting experts suggested that State Wildlife Agencies would do well to combine various private landowner programs under one program. Washington's PLWMA, Upland Wildlife Restoration, Road Management, Habitat Management programs are located in several major divisions and programs of WDFW. The fractionalized approach to private landowner programs creates problems with services, program continuity, funding, and administration.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

20. Reconcile the various private lands access programs in WDFW, including PLWMA, Upland Wildlife Restoration, Shooting Preserves, and Road Management into a single coordinated and comprehensive program and give this work a permanent "foot print" in the agency with support at all levels (same as recommendation 2).
21. PLWMA program should provide regulatory certainty to the landowner. PLWMA management plan is a partnership document that becomes an integral part of the cooperative agreement between WDFW and landowner that should be valid for up to 15 years or more and coincide with the 3-year hunting seasons recommendation cycle.
22. Economic viability of the program is not optional for the landowner, WDFW or the user public. Some low cost or free access hunting opportunities should be maintained through a permit drawing or other process that equalizes the chance that a hunter will receive access to a PLWMA.
23. Prepare a manual containing clear and concise program standards and guidelines, maintaining simplicity of administration, and encouraging resourcefulness (same as recommendation 10 & 15).
24. PLWMA cooperators should meet with Department personnel, as prescribed in the cooperative agreement or more frequently as needed, to coordinate, cooperate, communicate and resolve issues.

25. Private lands and public wildlife management solutions hinge on mutual respect for private property owners, WDFW, hunters, and wildlife (Same as recommendation 5 & 10).

## **6. WHAT ARE MAJOR BENEFITS OR SOME THINGS YOU LIKE ABOUT THE PLWMA PROGRAM AS IT IS CURRENTLY STRUCTURED?**

### **POLICY ISSUES**

The PLWMA program is based on the premise that private lands are valuable wildlife habitats that should be protected and enhanced. Private landowners are encouraged to allow public access for outdoor recreation, especially hunting, and are rewarded and recognized for practicing good land stewardship.

- Are there significant public values of the PLWMA program?
- Are the values received measurable in quantitative terms?

### **DISCUSSION**

In the State of Washington, approximately 55% of the land is in private ownership. These lands are typically located in the most fertile, productive and diverse habitats. The trend continues to be an increase in urban development with a corresponding loss of open space and important fish and wildlife habitats. Hunting access is declining because of the loss of wildlife habitat, and also because compatibility problems with current land uses on public and private lands.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

26. Maintain and publicize the many positive benefits and outcomes of the PLWMA program such as reduced damage, increased wildlife viewing and research, and improved hunting experience and quality of animals, increased access, and reduced urban sprawl.
27. PLWMAs are best focused on lands that are or might be closed to public hunting and other wildlife recreation opportunities or where wildlife habitat protection and enhancement would be beneficial. A major benefit of the PLWMA program is the conservation of wildlife habitat. Opening currently closed private lands to public hunts will benefit hunters both on public and private property.
28. Require that potential conflicts with a PLWMA and adjacent landowners be managed beforehand by contacting neighbors in the application process.
29. The WDFW may refuse landowner request for participation in the PLWMA program if the applicant does not meet the specified goals and objectives.

## **7. WHAT INCENTIVES ARE JUSTIFIED AND ADEQUATE?**

### **POLICY ISSUES**

Commission Policy C-6002 states, “The Private Lands Wildlife Management Area Program is a part of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Partners for the 90s: Public Resources, Private Lands Program with the intent to preserve, protect, improve and perpetuate fish and wildlife habitat on private lands and to increase and/or maintain existing recreational access for all wildlife users. The program was designed to provide recognition and incentives to landowners who are interested in measurably enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, populations, and providing a variety of wildlife recreational opportunities.”

- When considering incentives for the PLWMA program, what kinds of incentives do the landowners want/prefer?
- What kinds of PLWMA incentives are reasonable and justified from the hunter's perspective and are they the same as the landowners?
- Are the allocations of raffle, auction, and/or discretionary PLWMA permits (market based incentives) to the landowner illegal, unethical, or socially unacceptable?
- Do PLWMA incentives give away the State's authority to manage wildlife?
- Does the PLWMA “market based” fee structure go too far for the public values received in return?
- Does the current trial PLWMA decrease hunter participation because of hunter fees?

### **DISCUSSION**

A recent survey in Washington revealed a majority of landowners (55%) strongly or moderately agreed that private landowners should be compensated for providing hunting access. When asked the question what kinds of incentives should be provided to landowners for allowing hunting access the most common incentive named was “cash payouts.” When asked do you agree or disagree that private landowners should be compensated or offered special incentives for providing hunter access (32%) responded strongly agree and (23%) said they moderately agree. The incentive that had the highest percentage of landowners who strongly agreed that landowners should receive the incentive for allowing hunter access and enhancing wildlife habitat on their property was providing law enforcement and technical support (47%), providing cooperative road management (30%). The lowest percentages were for providing special PLWMA raffle/auction permits (15%) and providing a higher proportion of mature male big game permits (16%).

The PLWMA stakeholder group majority support landowner incentives for providing access and enhancing wildlife on their lands. The minority opinion did not support incentives because of the opinion it commercialized a public resource and they felt it was socially unacceptable and discriminatory against the average hunter.

Duda et al. (2002b) found that hunters willingness to pay for a day of hunting varied from \$1 to more than \$50. In a recent survey, landowners were asked what was a reasonable fee for a day

of hunting. Table 2 makes the comparison between the two surveys, which shows a wide difference between the hunters willingness to pay and landowner reasonable fee.

**Table 2. Landowner reasonable fee and hunter willingness to pay comparison**

Hunted Species	Landowner	Hunter		
	Reasonable fee/day	% Willing	Willingness to pay for a day of hunting Leading amount	% Not willing
Big game (deer)	\$136	62%	\$6-10	23%
Big game (elk)	\$136	55%	\$51+	33%
Eastern pheasant	\$55	64%	\$6-10	14%
Upland game birds	\$63	-	-	-
All hunting	\$132	-	-	-
Turkey	-	42%	\$1-5	30%
Waterfowl	-	71%	\$6-10	14%

## RECOMMENDATIONS

30. PLWMA wildlife management and public access programs require capital outlay so it is appropriate to maintain landowner opportunity to recoup expenses to accomplish positive public benefits that are agreed to and identified in a PLWMA Management Plan. For the PLWMA program to be successful and attractive to landowners, incentives need to be flexible and financially viable.
31. Incentives should be reasonable and attainable in scope and funding. PLWMA landowner incentives may include but are not limited to the following:
  - Commission authorized landowner permits for big game that can be raffled, auctioned, sold for access or are discretionarily allocated, however, raffling is the preferred process.
  - Customized limits for upland birds; based on simple, standardized criteria.
  - Customized season length and legal animal descriptions; based on simple, standardized criteria.
  - Free Access Hunts in exchange for habitat work on the PLWMA (Go Play Outside Program).
  - Allow flexible incentives for cooperatives with adjoining landowners.
  - Seek to preserve and enhance liability insurance limits for free access providers.
  - Signage and patrolling assistance.
  - Habitat development and technical assistance.
  - PLWMA Wildlife Management Plan development assistance.
32. The PLWMA Management Plan and Cooperative Agreement must embrace the program standards and guidelines, which establishes the working agreement between WDFW and cooperator unique to the specific project.
33. In the State of Washington, Wildlife management is primarily funded through user fees paid by the hunter. The use of the State's general fund revenues for wildlife management has been minimal and probably won't change in the near future. Private land wildlife management programs and public access will most likely depend upon hunter willingness to pay so it is recommended that WDFW develop a funding mechanism for private lands partnership programs.

34. WDFW must address the concerns of some opponents of the PLWMA program who believe that WDFW is allowing private landowners to sell wildlife. Write a statement for Commission Policy C6002 about the kinds of public benefits expected from a PLWMA agreement.

## **8. WHAT CHANGES CAN BE MADE IN THE PROGRAM TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL HUNTER PARTICIPATION?**

### **POLICY ISSUES**

The Fish and Wildlife Commission is committed to work with all interested citizens, state, local and tribal governments, and others, to establish rules, regulations, and partnerships which address the needs of the public. The PLWMA program was initiated to encourage landowners to permit public access for hunting, fishing, and other wildlife associated recreation. Programs to increase or enhance public access and improve private landowner relationships between the WDFW and hunters are warranted.

- Does the trial PLWMA program provide increased public access for hunting and other outdoor recreational activities beyond what was available prior to the program?
- Do the PLWMA fee access programs meet the intent of the program as it was envisioned at the start of the Partner for the 90s: Public Resources, Private Lands initiative?
- Does the public, including hunters, know enough about the PLWMA program to want to participate in it?

### **DISCUSSION**

One of the criticisms of the PLWMA program is that few people know much about it. A recent survey of general hunters indicated that among general hunters, 71% knew a little or nothing about the PLWMA program before the survey. The survey asked hunters who live in the vicinity of the PLWMA or have hunted in the Game Management Unit where the PLWMA is located if they have ever hunted a PLWMA and 49% indicated they have never hunted a PLWMA. A majority of both groups (77% of PLWMA users, 67% of general hunters) agreed that the PLWMA program should be continued and expanded to more lands that are privately owned. A majority of both groups (64% of PLWMA users, 67% of general hunters) agreed that the PLWMA program should be continued and expanded, but needs to be changed to better serve the hunter. Finally, the vast majority of both groups (83% of PLWMA users, 77% of general hunters) disagreed that the PLWMA program should be discontinued.

When landowners were asked whether they supported or opposed the existing PLWMA program, a relatively high percentage (16%) did not know.

Very early in the PLWMA stakeholders review process the group unanimously agreed that the PLWMA program had merit and should be continued with modifications.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

35. PLWMAs should be used as extension programs to demonstrate the benefits of wildlife enhancement programs.
36. Provide better public exposure of the PLWMA program through WDFW media sources, marketing plans, and landowners. Place the PLWMA program on the WDFW website. Develop a brochure about the PLWMA program and include instruction about the PLWMA program in the Hunter Education curriculum.
37. Provide a program that has a variety of hunting, watchable wildlife, and other recreational opportunities as well as scientific study.
38. Have some PLWMA access that is low cost or free hunting access.
39. An objective of PLWMA should be to provide a challenging and ethical hunting opportunity based on sound biology.
40. Participation in the program should be encouraged for smaller size landowners.
41. The Department should consider the results of the public opinion surveys to evaluate the public's perception of PLWMAs.
42. The Department should carefully monitor the number of properties and acreage in the program and conduct performance audits.

## **9. SHOULD THERE BE A MECHANISM FOR FUNDING A PLWMA PROGRAM? WHAT ARE SOME SUGGESTED FUNDING MECHANISMS?**

### POLICY ISSUES

In the developmental stages of the PLWMA program, funding for the administration of the program was an issue. The Landowner Relations Program of the Washington Wildlife Commission (McGlenn 1991) recommended that a PLWMA license be established to offset anticipated costs for program administration. The Washington Department of Wildlife, Landowner Incentive Proposal suggested a \$1,000 application fee, payable every three years. A PLWMA license was never requested from the State Legislature.

- Should the PLWMA cooperators pay for WDFW administration of the program through a license fee?
- Has the lack of funding been a determinant of the PLWMA program success?
- Has the WDFW emphasis on programmatic changes to administer the trial PLWMA program been successful?
- Are the PLWMA cooperators satisfied with the level and quality of administrative and technical support for the program?
- Is cost the major issue affecting landowner interest in the program and hunter use of the trial PLWMAs?

## DISCUSSION

The PLWMA stakeholder group felt strongly that funding of the program was essential. The three trial PLWMAs were authorized and implemented by WDFW with minimal allocation of personnel time and no specific budget account to administer the program. Consequently, the identification of expenditures for the program is not possible because expenditures were absorbed in other activities (species management, hunting season recommendations, etc).

The recent survey of Washington hunters and landowners showed support for funding private lands access development and habitat enhancement programs. In an open-ended question (no list was read), general hunters most commonly said that the funding should come from a reprioritization of activities funded by general hunting license revenues (22%) and from dedicated revenues from a hunting license fee increase (21%). Four specific funding sources for private lands access development and habitat enhancement programs were discussed in the survey. Three of the potential funding sources had a majority of general hunters who strongly or moderately supported the use of those funding sources for private lands access development and habitat enhancement programs; general hunting license revenues (68%), hunter access or wildlife habitat stamp (56%), and legislative appropriations from the general fund (51%), Duda et al. (2003).

Landowners were asked how the private lands access and habitat programs should be funded. General hunting license (42%) was the leading answer followed by “don’t know” (26%), Duda et al. (2003).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

43. WDFW Funds will be needed to administer start-up costs and management oversight of PLWMAs. If the program is to be successful, (e.g., expanded in scope and participation) additional staff efforts by WDFW will be required. This will require programmatic funding, either reallocation of existing departmental funding or generation of new funds dedicated to this task (Same as recommendation 3).
44. Identify funding for administration of the PLWMA program in WDFW by first reprioritizing activities; second, seeking a license fee structure for PLWMAs.
45. WDFW must make an assessment of the estimated cost of running a program, determine a source of funding, and allocate funding.

**10. ARE THE THREE TRIAL PLWMA COOPERATORS SATISFIED WITH THE CURRENT PROGRAM? (Assigned to PLWMA cooperators)**

## **POLICY ISSUES**

Private lands in the State of Washington are being converted from wildlife habitat to other uses. Loss of wildlife habitat has impacted hunters but there has also been a significant loss of access to private lands for hunting and other outdoor recreation.

- What, if anything, would the impact be to hunters in Washington if the trial PLWMA programs were eliminated?
- Has the trial PLWMA program increased public access onto private lands for hunting and other outdoor recreation?
- Has the trial PLWMA program provided enhanced wildlife populations and habitats, especially for game species?
- Are the current PLWMA cooperators satisfied with the program?

## **DISCUSSION**

The PLWMA stakeholder group asked the three PLWMA cooperators what would happen if the trial PLWMA programs were terminated. The response was that their lands would be closed to public access.

A recent survey of Washington landowners indicated they provide open access for hunting (19%), access by permission (32%), limited access to family and friends (16%), fee access (1%) and leased access (1%). Private lands closed to public access amounted to (28%).

Those landowners who allow some public access (open access, access by permission, fee and leased access) totaled 54%. Those landowners who allow no public access (limited access to family and friends and closed to public access) totaled 46%.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

46. Improve agency, program and regional support to the PLWMA program (Same as recommendation 3). PLWMA cooperators need better commitment from WDFW biologists and administrators.
47. Maintain a PLWMA-like program that provides adequate incentives to improve wildlife habitat and defray liability and other costs of providing access to the public.
48. Need better standards and guidelines manual (same recommendation as #10)

## **11. ARE THE USERS OF THE PLWMAs SATISFIED WITH THE PROGRAM?**

## **POLICY ISSUES**

One of the main goals of the trial PLWMA program was to provide hunter access onto private lands. A recent survey (Duda et al. 2002b) found that the majority of all hunters thought private

lands were very important to wildlife and outdoor recreation. This implied that hunters would have an opportunity to hunt private lands even though a fee might be charged to gain that access. Rules that are more specific were subsequently developed for the PLWMA programs to structure the program in cooperation with the landowner. This resulted in greater complexity and less flexibility.

- Are the PLWMA users satisfied with their overall experience on the trial PLWMAs?
- What factors contributed to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the program?

## **DISCUSSION**

PLWMA users were recently surveyed and asked, “What are your main reasons for hunting on PLWMAs? Thirteen percent each stated it was a “good program” and “close to home.” Twelve percent each stated, “better/more game” and “additional hunting opportunity” (2<sup>nd</sup> tag). Eleven percent stated their reason was “to avoid the crowd.”

A strong majority (86%) of PLWMA users said PLWMAs are very or somewhat important in providing access. A strong majority of PLWMA users (90%) thought that the PLWMAs are very or somewhat important in providing habitat for wildlife. A majority of general hunters (79%) strongly or moderately agreed that the PLWMA program is worthwhile.

A majority (72%) of PLWMA users was very or somewhat satisfied with their experience hunting on PLWMAs, with those very satisfied (41%) outnumbering those somewhat satisfied (31%). Those who were dissatisfied (14%) with their hunting experience most commonly said they were dissatisfied because there was not enough game (41%), followed by poor access (16%), access fee being too costly (14%), and that landowner cooperation did not meet hunter’s expectations (14%).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

If the PLWMA program is not meeting the expectations of the user, do one of the following:

49. Amend the program to meet the needs of the hunter in cooperation with the landowner or terminate the program and do something else.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Our stakeholder group work is concluded with the submission of this report to the WDFW. A total of 49 recommendations are submitted to address each of the key questions concerning the future of the Private Lands Wildlife Management Program. Some recommendations are duplicated because they have relevance to more than one question.

The following recommendations are preeminent:

13. A PLWMA-like program should be continued, expanded where appropriate, authorized as a permanent program, be more flexible, and made available to private landowners who wish to work in partnership with WDFW.

14. PLWMA program should be consolidated with other existing private lands programs such as the Upland Wildlife Restoration Program, Road Management, Shooting Preserves, and Public Access (Appendix C).
15. Private lands programs should emphasize “partnerships” and have dedicated staffing and funding to accomplish the program. WDFW Funds will be needed to administer start-up costs and management oversight of PLWMAs. If the program is to be successful, (e.g., expanded in scope and participation) additional staff efforts by WDFW will be required. This will require programmatic funding, either reallocation of existing departmental funding or generation of new funds dedicated to this task.
16. The name of the program should be changed and shortened to clearly reflect the goals and objectives. We suggest Private Lands Partnership (PLP) program.
17. The current guidelines and procedures are not adequate. It is highly recommended that the Department create a PLWMA program standards and guidelines manual that emphasizes achieving a common goal that fosters cooperation, coordination, teamwork, mutual respect and partnership building.
18. PLWMA program should provide regulatory certainty to the landowner. The PLWMA management plan is a partnership document that becomes an integral part of the cooperative agreement between WDFW and landowner that should be valid for up to 15 years or more and coincide with the 3-year hunting seasons recommendation cycle.
19. Economic viability of the program is not optional for the landowner, WDFW or the user public. Some low cost or free access hunting opportunities should be maintained through a permit drawing or other process that equalizes the chance that a hunter will receive access to a PLWMA.
20. PLWMAs are best focused on lands that are or might be closed to public hunting and other wildlife recreation opportunities or where wildlife habitat protection and enhancement would be beneficial. A major benefit of the PLWMA program is the conservation of wildlife habitat. Opening of currently closed private or fee-hunting lands to public hunts will benefit hunters both on public and private property.
21. PLWMA wildlife management and public access programs require capital outlay so it is appropriate to maintain landowner opportunity to recoup expenses to accomplish positive public benefits that are agreed to and identified in a PLWMA Management Plan. For the PLWMA program to be successful and attractive to landowners, incentives need to be flexible and financially viable.
10. Incentives should be reasonable and attainable in scope and funding. PLWMA landowner incentives may include but are not limited to the following:
  - Commission authorized landowner permits for big game that can be raffled, auctioned, sold for access or are discretionarily allocated, however, raffling is the preferred process.
  - Customized limits for upland birds; based on simple, standardized criteria.
  - Customized season length and legal animal descriptions; based on simple, standardized criteria.
  - Free Access Hunts in exchange for habitat work on the PLWMA (Go Play Outside Program).
  - Flexible incentives for cooperatives with adjoining Landowners.
  - Seek to preserve and enhance liability insurance limits for free access providers.
  - Signage and patrolling assistance.

- Habitat development and technical assistance.
  - PLWMA Wildlife Management Plan development assistance.
11. The PLWMA Management Plan and Cooperative Agreement must embrace the program standards and guidelines, which establishes the working agreement between WDFW and cooperator unique to the specific project.
  12. Repeal minimum acreage requirement and use new biological and logistical application criteria.

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**FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION**  
**POLICY DECISION**

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<b>POLICY TITLE:</b>	<b>Private Lands Wildlife Management Area</b>	<b>POLICY NUMBER:</b>	<b>POL-C6002</b>
Cancels:	N/A	Effective Date	December 6, 1996
		Termination Date	(if applicable):
See Also:	RCW 77.04.055 RCW 77.12.320 Chap. 101. 1996 law (raffle) WAC 232-28-260	Approved by:	<u>/s/ Lisa Pelly</u> Fish and Wildlife Commission Chair

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The Fish and Wildlife Commission goal is to ***preserve, protect, and perpetuate wildlife, fish, and wildlife and fish habitat, of the state of Washington*** with the stated objective that, Habitat is the key to fish and wildlife. The Commission shall develop partnerships and promote actions which preserve, protect, perpetuate, and restore habitats of sensitive, threatened, and endangered species; habitats with high levels of species diversity and richness; and habitats in pristine environments. Furthermore, *the Commission will work with all interested citizens; state, local, and tribal governments; fish and wildlife organizations; and the Governor, director, and staff to establish rules, regulations, and partnerships which address the needs of the public while maintaining the intent of preserving, protecting, and perpetuating fish and wildlife resources.* (Goals, Policies and Objectives, Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission, Feb. 2, 1995).

The Private Lands Wildlife Management Area Program is a part of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Partners for the 90s: Public Resources, Private Lands Program with the intent to preserve, protect, improve and perpetuate fish and wildlife habitat on private lands and to increase and/or maintain existing recreational access for all wildlife users. The program is designed to provide recognition and incentives to landowners who are interested in measurably enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, populations, and providing a variety of wildlife recreational opportunities.

**Policy:** It is the policy of the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission to:

- Encourage landowners to protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat.
- Encourage landowners to permit public access for hunting, fishing, and other wildlife associated recreation.
- Provide landowners recognition and incentives for practicing good fish and wildlife management that enhances fish and wildlife habitats.

**Definition:**

- Private Lands Wildlife Management Areas (PLWMAs): Private land wildlife management areas are identified lands where partnerships between landowner(s) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) are entered into by cooperative agreement for the purposes of enhancing fish and wildlife habitats, populations and opportunities to enjoy and utilize the resources.

**Standards and Guidelines:**

1. Fish and wildlife are the property of the state (RCW 77.12.010) and nothing in the PLWMA plan or agreement should be construed as transferring ownership from the public to the private sector.
2. PLWMAs are designed for private lands and includes lands held by an individual or corporation. Small parcels of public land may be included if;
  - a. the public land is completely surrounded by private land;
  - b. the public land is otherwise inaccessible to the general public;
  - c. provides a hunting opportunity for the public which otherwise does not exist;
3. PLWMAs are designed for contiguous land holdings over 5,000 acres. Adjacent landowners may combine to form a cooperative to meet the minimum acreage requirement.
4. Fencing or other activities designed to control natural wildlife movement or migrations will not be permitted on PLWMAs.
5. Fish and wildlife management on PLWMAs will be limited to endemic fish, wildlife, and currently managed introduced fish and wildlife species. No species prohibited by law will be allowed.
6. Enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat is an essential component of this program and the responsibility of the participating landowner. Restoration of fish and wildlife habitats should be emphasized.
7. Propagation and subsequent "put and take" of fish or wildlife is not permitted.
8. Supplemental feeding of wildlife is not permitted unless allowed by the plan.
9. The capture or transfer of fish or wildlife by the landowner will not be permitted without written authorization from WDFW.
10. PLWMAs shall have provisions for significant public benefit and participation.
11. Every person hunting or fishing on a PLWMA shall have in their possession a valid Washington hunting or fishing license, tag, permit, catch record card or stamp as required.
12. Wildlife damage occurring adjacent to a PLWMA which cause is linked to a PLWMA plan of action will be addressed as a priority through a coordinated approach between the PLWMA Cooperator and WDFW.
13. Hunting programs on the PLWMA will be conducted within the highest standards of fair chase and ethical behavior.
14. Hunting and fishing season recommendations will be coordinated between the PLWMA Cooperator and WDFW for public comment and presentation to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for adoption. Auction and raffle permit hunts administered by the PLWMA Cooperator may be authorized.

## APPENDIX B. Compilation of Answers to PLWMA Questions - May 7, 2003

### **1) SHOULD THE PLWMA PROGRAM BE EXPANDED?**

#### ANGELA STRINGER:

Yes. Public access will become an increasingly important issue for hunters as the population of WA grows. A program that provides a framework for landowners to justify the effort and expense of allowing the public to hunt on private land will be critical to keeping these lands open.

#### BRUCE SMITH:

The program has been around for 12 years, why only 3 participants? There needs to be some changes that reduce complexity and provide certainty. We need more participants.

#### JOE MURRAY:

The PLWMA program should be expanded. On private land in Washington, the State has primary responsibility for management of wildlife, while the landowner manages the habitat. Much can be accomplished for the benefit of the animals, the public, and the landowner when cooperation is the basis for planning and decision-making.

#### BRAD JOHNSON:

I think so, but with fairly significant modifications.

#### READE BROWN:

The general consensus appears to be yes and I would concur, with reservations. One is that most of the discussion appears to be concerning smaller size units. What happens when Weyerhaeuser comes knocking on the door and wants to enroll their holdings in a PLWMA.

#### KEN RAEDEKE:

There is a clear need to address the issue of public hunting access on the large blocks of private land in Washington state.

At the present time, the PLWMA program is a very minor blip on the Washington landscape. The program offers opportunities to the general public that want to take advantage of the access allowed under the program, and special opportunities for other hunters that want to avail themselves of the opportunity and/or pay the additional costs (not unlike the many who go out of state and pay extra of additional hunting opportunities).

In addition to the few PLWMAs there are literally millions of acres of public lands that are also available for hunters.

So, I would say that the PLWMA program should be expanded under a number of conditions, as follows:

- Hunter opportunity is maintained or expanded
- The PLWMAs provide meaningful habitat enhancement that measurable
- The PLWMAs achieve meaningful and measurable wildlife population goals

#### MARTIN KEILWITZ:

- No! It has not been a popular program and does not meet the objectives.
- Yes! The Upland Wildlife Restoration access program has been very successful and very popular. It should be funded, expanded to cover big game and with service as incentives and be expanded throughout the state.

#### FRED ZITERKOPF:

Unless we have a meaningful system, to measure gains made in habitat (translating into animal number increases) and meaningful (simple and more open access) the program shouldn't be expanded. Continue with another 5 years of testing but this time with established and measurable

goals and the participant's full involvement with setting criteria for participation and measurement.

CLIFF BARBRE:

Yes, with limits. PLWMA-wildlife should be separate from PLWMA-Fish. The debate about fish has a life of its own. The standards and guidelines mostly address wildlife anyway. Fish and wildlife habitats are not necessarily compatible.

PLWMA-wildlife programs should be allowed in various parts of the state to enhance wildlife. Existing PLWMAs should be accepted and allowed to proceed.

MAKAH TRIBE:

Not on industrial timberlands, that poses minimal risk of development or change in status from use for commercial timber production. These lands are already compatible with hunting for game species and tribal access (lands are consistent with the purpose of hunting as upheld in WA courts) and typically managed in a manner that benefits most game species. If the PLWMA program is to be expanded it should be on privately owned ranches/farms that are currently exclusive of public opportunity and provide opportunities for changes in land use practices that will benefit hunted species and provide public opportunity for hunting,

**2) ARE THE PRESENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLWMA PROGRAM CLEAR, CONCISE AND VIABLE? WHAT ELEMENT OF THE PLWMA PROGRAM IN WASHINGTON IS MOST IMPORTANT; WILDLIFE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT OR PUBLIC ACCESS OR ARE THEY EQUALLY IMPORTANT?**

ANGELA STRINGER:

The goals and objectives are clear. Some details of implementation could use clarification, however this is an artifact of WDFW resource allocation, not the goals and objectives themselves. For Washington as a whole, wildlife habitat enhancement and public access should be equally important. However, the manner in which each of these two objectives is implemented should be tailored to the specific conditions of each individual participant. For example, habitat enhancement for big game/upland birds will likely require greater focus on farm/ranch land than on forested land; access and management of hunters will require greater effort for landowners near large urban areas; etc.

BRUCE SMITH:

The goals and objectives need to be complimented with clear, concise and viable standards and guidelines. There should also be an unequivocal statement supporting habitat enhancement as the priority. I concur with Brad Johnson's statement.

JOE MURRAY:

The goals are clear, concise, and viable.

BRAD JOHNSON

Yes

Without habitat, there is no wildlife, and therefore not much reason to have access.

READE BROWN:

Yes, I believe they are.

The primary benefits of PLMWAs are habitat improvement for wildlife. Without habitat, we don't have wildlife. Conversely, the public perception of PLMWAs is based on the restriction of, or cost of, access. Before the PLWMA program will receive broad public support, this void will have to be addressed.

KEN RAEDEKE:

The goals and objectives are clearly stated in the program documents, but are not clearly understood by many of the general public and/or field staff of WDFW. As exemplified by several of the email documents distributed, many in the general public think the program is designed to give them free access to all private lands, and treat it as their own (and make disparaging comments about their hosts – the landowners – at the same time).

Also, field staff of the WDFW has not been supportive of the program, and in their dealings with the general public may not have fostered a clear understanding of the goals and objectives (which they have not supported). This is an issue that needs to be dealt with through an educational program.

Both components (habitat and access) are important.

MARTIN KEILWITZ:

- No! Something is wrong; these are hard to define because Landowners, Hunters, and the Agency all have different objectives.
- Yes! Public access is the most important; the only reason to create a program in the first place is public access. Habitat enhancement is always desirable but it can happen any time even without an access program.

FRED ZITERKOPF:

My previous response indicates I don't believe goals and objectives are clear because no measurement is in place. Habitat enhancement is critical for maintaining and increasing animal populations but if done without providing simpler, more open access why have it as a program administered by WDFW? Idealistically, habitat is the top priority but without access, it has little impact on providing for the future of public hunting in this state.

CLIFF BARBRE:

The goals and objectives are clear.

Habitat and public access are equally important. As defined, PLWMA cooperators are mandated to enhance habitat and also mandated to allow limited amount of public access, as is their right of ownership.

PLWMAs are set up to allow public access, even to define types of public access (standard #2)

There is plenty of public access on non-participating lands, even to the point of using WDFW programs such as “walk-in only”, “free hunting”, or “permission only” hunting.

MAKAH TRIBE:

The stated goal is to protect/improve habitat and increase recreational access for all wildlife users. Another important goal of the PLWMA Program should be implementing management strategies that lead to increasing populations of wildlife (within established population goals for where PLWMA occurs) important to the segments of the public/tribes that are using these areas.

### **3) ARE THE CURRENT GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES INCLUDING CRITERIA FOR ENROLING IN THE PLWMA PROGRAM SUFFICIENT?**

ANGELA STRINGER:

More or less. Guidelines and expectations could be more clearly defined although it will be important to maintain sufficient flexibility to customize each program to the needs/conditions of each participant. Details such as minimum acreage, access options, funding options etc should be flexible. Many of these details should be revisited by the stakeholder group after the larger program framework has been agreed on.

BRUCE SMITH:

Flexibility coupled with incentives is the key. PLWMA proponents should submit a management plan that could be ranked against established criteria. Drop such things as the acreage requirement and evaluate the project proposal based upon wildlife benefit and associated recreation. WDFW purchased the 900acre Big Sky Ranch in the Methow Valley for approximately \$5.6m. If that same property had petitioned for inclusion in the PLWMA program, would it have been denied because it didn't meet the acreage requirement? The broader the participation, the wider range of options for the hunting public.

JOE MURRAY:

Guidelines need to be revised allowing more flexibility in developing PLWMA plans.

BRAD JOHNSON:

I feel they need to be simpler, much more flexible and allow much higher participation from a diverse mix of landowners.

READE BROWN:

They seem fairly reasonable to me though there maybe room for more flexibility that would make the program more attractive to a broader range of landowners.

KEN RAEDEKE:

In general, the programmatic requirements of the PLWMAs equal or exceed those of the surrounding GMUs as managed by the WDFW. Some of the best data sets for big game population monitoring in the state come from two of the PLWMAs, and in all cases, more detailed field data is collected that could be used as a demonstration of the various game management strategies employed.

More positive interactions with the local WDFW personnel could make the process even more beneficial to all parties involved. Assistance in field review of positive enhancement efforts and recommendations for enhancement would greatly add to the program. WDFW personnel often approach the PLWMAs wearing their regulatory hat and rather than a cooperators hat.

The biggest obstacle in developing a PLWMA plan is the lack of support from the field biologists of WDFW who generally did not understand the guidelines and procedures of the program and/or were not supportive of the goals and objectives of the program.

MARTIN KEILWITZ:

Not enough information!

FRED ZITERKOPF:

Without management plans that set goals for habitat alteration, animal management and hunter access the program doesn't have adequate standards for enrollment. Acreage limits preclude very valuable lands, especially adjacent to state or federal lands, from participating. Base the program enrollment on what the proponent can provide in habitat and hunter access. Example; Private farmland, 500 acres, adjacent to a forest may be small but it provides winter range and access across it may give access to 10000 acres of federal land. That small parcel may go further towards meeting the goals than 10,000 acres someplace else.

CLIFF BARBRE:

Yes. The details will be in the plan submitted by the applicant. The plan should state the objectives and methods that will be applied. I see the current standards and guidelines as mostly criteria as defined by law and authority given to the WDFW.

Cooperators must be selected with the priorities being wildlife and habitat, not as moneymaking project, although a reasonable return for expenditures and time should be expected.

MAKAH TRIBE:

Need to distinguish between private landowners and corporations. Emphasis should be on the private landowner that has a personal stake in the property rather than a corporation that is using the land for strictly economic return and pose little risk of development and fragmentation. The minimum size should be flexible enough to allow small landowners to enroll, particularly when key properties for wildlife are probable for loss to development and fragmentation.

#### **4) ARE THE THREE TRIAL PLWMAS ACHIEVING THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM AS ORIGINALLY STATED?**

##### ANGELA STRINGER:

All three PLWMAs have been successfully conducting habitat enhancement and all three have provided hunter access opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable without the program. There will always be disagreement over the balance of public access to private lands, and cost to the hunter. It is imperative that we achieve a balance between extremes: large amounts of private land unavailable to hunters due to closure or lease to hunt clubs versus very expensive and/or rare hunting opportunities such as some of the examples from CO, UT, and states further east.

##### BRUCE SMITH:

Even though our focus is Mule Deer, habitat projects have shown significant benefit for a wide variety of upland and shrub-steppe dependent species. The lands included in the PLWMA were closed to public access before the PLWMA was initiated. We are absolutely exceeding the current goals and objectives.

##### JOE MURRAY:

To some degree the current PLWMAs are achieving their goals and objectives.

##### BRAD JOHNSON:

I think to some degree they are and I believe with some changes they could do much better.

##### READE BROWN:

PLWMA area 201 definitely is exceeding the goals as established, Area 401 appears to be meeting goals, but I had some question about Area 600. It seemed that even though the primary concerns were with big game and furbearers, virtually all the habitat improvement work was directed toward fish. Perhaps this was an acceptable trade off when the program was established.

##### KEN RAEDEKE:

The three PLWMAs that are functioning at this time each provide different approaches to the goals and objectives articulated by the program documents. As such each is more or less effective in achieving individual goals. Evaluation of the success in achieving the goals and objectives is to a great degree clouded by the public's perception of the acceptability of the different approaches of the individual PLWMAs, the lack of information on the actual results of the PLWMA programs, and lack of support of WDFW field personnel.

##### MARTIN KEILWITZ:

Not enough information!

##### FRED ZITERKOPF:

The PLWMAs meet the general goals.

##### CLIFF BARBRE:

If we are looking at the policy provisions as stated by Policy #C6002, yes and no. PLWMA'S 1) encourage landowners to protect and enhance habitat, 2) encourage landowners to allow public access, 3) the recognition is questionable but some incentives are there.

MAKAH TRIBE:

The goal seems to have been met by the Buckrun area where the PLWMA manager has apparently improved habitat conditions that have dramatically increased game numbers and have provided public opportunity where none existed previously. The other 2 PLWMA managers on industrial timberlands have shown no evidence of improving habitat conditions and provided no evidence that supports increases in game numbers. Additionally, both of these areas already had a fee for hunting arrangement prior to entering the PLWMA program where they continued to charge fees for access.

Additionally, landowners should not be able to use the program to reduce densities of game animals for damage purposes. The Pysht PLWMA has a stated goal of lowering blacktail deer density to reduce damage. Hunters paying for access to hunt a PLWMA area where hunter numbers are limited should have the opportunity to enjoy at a minimum encountering a number of animals that they are hunting.

**5) AS YOU SEE IT, WHAT ARE THE MAJOR PROBLEMS WITH THE PLWMA PROGRAM AS IT IS CURRENTLY STRUCTURED?**

ANGELA STRINGER

The primary problem is lack of WDFW allocation of resources to develop and facilitate programs. Also, landowner ability to justify the expense of running a PLWMA will be critical to developing future programs. Current assumptions about how this can work are vague, especially given the sensitive nature of public ownership of wildlife on private lands.

BRUCE SMITH:

Lack of regulatory certainty. A lack of sufficient contract length to support the substantial time and investment in habitat enhancement activities. Lack of WDFW employee support (glad to see that we're not alone in this one). Lack of simplified reporting and evaluation systems. Lack of a re-determined WDFW team that deals with the PLWMA program and that can ensure objectivity.

JOE MURRAY:

- Setting PLWMA seasons and bag limits need to have sufficient flexibility to allow for the inclusion of all harvest information from the previous hunting seasons.
- PLWMAs need to be marketed to the public to improve hunter participation and landowner involvement.
- There is insufficient enforcement against illegal hunting activities.
- There is the public perception that a PLWMA will automatically increase the wildlife populations. However, the landowner can enhance habitat and improve access but because of other factors such as increase in cougar populations and hair loss disease the number of animals may not increase.

The program is not financially viable for landowners.

BRAD JOHNSON:

There seems to be a need for a simpler way of addressing seasons, tag allocations, and impacts to surrounding areas. I think that the minimum acreage requirements could be much smaller such that users would have more diverse and flexible options.

READE BROWN:

The operators can better address this question (see question 10). The primary problem I see is the lack of understanding on the part of the public concerning potential benefits of this program.

Their perception is that it caters to the wealthy and that wildlife is being sold to the highest bidders for the exclusive benefit of the landowner.

KEN RAEDEKE:

- Lack of public understanding of the program and results of the program
- Lack of support of the program by WDFW field staff
- Insufficient incentives for landowners to enroll in the program
- Inability of the programs to be financially viable given the large amount of public land available to hunters

MARTIN KEILWITZ:

- They are hard to use
- They are too expensive to use.
- They cost the landowner and the taxpayer too much to administer. (Can you imagine how many pages in the hunting pamphlet it would take if we had 1000 of these things? It would take a week of commission meetings just to approve the permits.)
- They are market based; Public wildlife is being given to the landowner to sell. The argument is always that it is an access program but a bull permit or the right to kill a certain animal is not an access program.

FRED ZITERKOPF:

Hunters want access that is not limited to a permit system controlling who can hunt, when they can hunt, and limited to does only. The current program does that and it is the biggest negative from a hunter perspective.

CLIFF BARBRE:

Balance between PLWMAs and surrounding non-participating landowners or non-participating public. Attitudes and cooperation need to be compatible to work out agreements.

How will policing of private lands be done? The authority lies with local departments and the DFWF. But will they have the money and personnel to deal with it?

MAKAH TRIBE:

The stated emphasis by WDFW to expand the program on industrial timberlands in western Washington is the major problem. These lands are already compatible with hunting for game species and public/tribal access and typically managed in a manner that benefits most game species.

**6) WHAT ARE MAJOR BENEFITS OR SOME THINGS YOU LIKE ABOUT THE PLWMA PROGRAM AS IT IS CURRENTLY STRUCTURED?**

ANGELA STRINGER:

The program is flexible and allows the landowner to tailor their program to the specific conditions of their property.

BRUCE SMITH:

It encourages landowners to invest in wildlife and their habitats. It opens lands to the public that would otherwise be closed. It is essentially a "free market" system. If we provide a product that the public values, then we can be successful. It allows us to set herd management and harvest objectives as long as we meet the state's minimums. It produces more wildlife while reducing damage complaints. It benefits hunting on adjoining lands that are not enrolled.

JOE MURRAY:

- A quality hunting experience
- General public hunting access
- Increased wildlife and fish populations
- Improved wildlife monitoring

Habitat enhancement for both fish and wildlife.

BRAD JOHNSON:

The program encourages landowners to open up lands for hunting that might well have otherwise been closed to the general public. The PLWMAs provide top quality habitat, greater season flexibility, and the in-state opportunity to see older age class, quality animals. The program can reduce the WDFW liability for crop damage.

READE BROWN:

Habitat Improvement! Also forms a closer working relationship between the landowner and wildlife professionals, requiring both to recognize the others problems.

KEN RAEDEKE:

Not given in order of importance:

- Demonstration of alternatives in big game management
- Demonstration of benefits of active habitat enhancement
- Potential improvement of WDFW-public-landowner relationships
- Maintenance or increase in hunter access to private lands
- Habitat enhancement by private landowners
- Increased monitoring of game populations on these areas resulting in improved data
- Potential realization by landowners that wildlife can have value, and not be just a liability

MARTIN KEILWITZ:

- Some like Buck Run, do expand the game populations by feeding etc.
- I like the annual recreational access permit, which allows access for wildlife watching as well as camping and hunting in season even firewood permits. This will fly on most tree farms; the key is the price. Perhaps the state could get involved in this program. I could see it would screen out a lot bad guys and problems they create to the landowners

FRED ZITERKOPF:

The program does provide for habitat enhancement and limited access.

CLIFF BARBRE:

In addition to the obvious goals and objectives, PLWMAs could serve as research areas for wildlife (some of which has been done). They act as a winter refuge with “free flow access”. They act as a control with adjustments to hunting seasons. A non-hunter access area for shutter bugs, and those just interested in viewing wildlife.

MAKAH TRIBE:

The Buckrun PLWMA should be the primary example of the program being implemented correctly. The properties were not open for public hunting prior to the PLWMA being established and habitat improvements were made to not only improve baseline conditions but also have resulted in significant increases in wildlife populations. The emphasis for future PLWMAs should be on privately owned lands where real benefits are documented and public access where it did not previously exist are created.

## **7) WHAT INCENTIVES ARE JUSTIFIED AND ADEQUATE?**

ANGELA STRINGER:

Incentives to landowners: Economic return that includes moderate profit in addition to recouping costs associated with program implementation. It is important to acknowledge that economic return that only covers the cost of the program is not an incentive; it is simply a way to pay for the program. Most landowners will not take on the added logistic commitment of running a program without a true economic incentive to justify the extra work/liability associated with public access.

Incentives to hunters: Improved recreational opportunity on a landowner at a reasonable cost. This may simply involve access to previously closed land, or it may involve more elaborate opportunities such as greater road access, camping access, access to hunting opportunities under different management scenarios from standard WDFW management (e.g. season length, timing, antler restrictions, firearm type, etc).

Incentives to WDFW/public good: A commitment to wildlife habitat enhancement/maintenance and game population management at a scale much more site-specific than could normally be accomplished by general WDFW management. An increased variety of recreational opportunities for the hunting public.

BRUCE SMITH:

The answer to this question was provided by the other states. The key is to provide maximum flexibility. The project proponent should be able to describe the kinds of incentives that will make the project successful. The department's role is to evaluate those incentives against the wildlife and recreational benefits of the PLWMA plan.

JOE MURRAY:

The structure of PLWMA incentives should be a win-win situation for landowners, wildlife and the public. This will require creativity in dealing with individual landowners. The most likely structures to succeed will be ones that involve a free market approach, whether it involves raffles, auctions, or direct sales of tags.

BRAD JOHNSON:

I think the program incentives need modifications to allow them to be much more flexible. The program must have real incentives that encourage the landowner to have real desire to make wildlife management a priority on his land, yet allow simpler options for those landowners that want less involvement.

I've been thinking about one very flexible program that goes from simple "FREE HUNTING" like our current UWRP, WY or MT, for all types of game, to a more elaborate "SPECIES SPECIFIC" one like our current PLWMA'S. On the more "species specific" end of the spectrum, we could use allotted landowner tags (based on simple, standardized criteria) with longer, standardized seasons and Agency approved well-implemented Wildlife Management Plans. This could simplify many of the complications found in our current PLWMAs and states like CO and UT. More intensive programs with landowners who want to provide bigger bucks can spend bigger bucks on their Wildlife Management Plan and charge bigger bucks to a more limited number of "fee" hunters. A set percentage of their landowner tags can provide new opportunity for our younger and disadvantaged hunters in exchange for hands on habitat restoration, weed control, etc., possibly with assistance thru the new WDFW Go Play Outdoors program.

Landowners who want to keep it simple can allow totally free access in exchange for standard seasons and tags, signage, liability protection and improved enforcement.

Proper incentives can help the landowner retain their heritage and encourage them to avoid the alternatives of ranchette developments. Greater incentives could be available to landowners who

create larger habitat blocks and corridors by cooperating with neighbors, which could reduce broader scale management implications.

READE BROWN:

If the program is to be successfully expanded, the Department of F & W needs to establish a group of experts whose full time responsibility would be in providing expertise and support for the landowners involved. Also their enforcement people would need to be included.

KEN RAEDEKE:

The current incentives offered by the program do not appear to be adequate, as there have been few landowners willing to enroll in the program.

The incentives need to provide a clear economic benefit for the majority of landowners, as these are largely commercial land holdings.

MARTIN KEILWITZ:

What ever we can afford and will do the job as long as we don't sell the wildlife to get it.

FRED ZITERKOPF:

Landowners need to address.

CLIFF BARBRE:

As far as cash incentives are concerned, none.

I suppose everything has a cost to someone. A trade-off on positive projects done for wildlife could be compensated by allowance for permits, public work crews for habitat establishment, and policing policies that would benefit the wildlife, the public, and the landowner.

MAKAH TRIBE:

Seasons and permit levels should be based on goals and objectives (regarding each hunted species of wildlife) for the GMU where the PLWMA is established. Increases in permit levels and longer hunting season should be provided when landowners document real benefits in terms of habitat improvement and most importantly increased populations of hunted species that would provide increased opportunity for harvest.

## **8) WHAT CHANGES CAN BE MADE IN YOUR PROGRAM TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL HUNTER PARTICIPATION?**

ANGELA STRINGER:

PLWMA 401 (based on general feedback from our Customer Advisory Council):

- Expanded elk hunting opportunities as the population recovers.
- Greater bear hunting opportunity (spring).
- Turkeys

BRUCE SMITH:

Greater landowner participation in the PLWMA program. We on PLWMA 201 currently provide greater participation rates in terms of harvest, hunter density and participation on our 64 sq. mi. than the state does on their 300 sq. mi. limited-entry, quality Mule Deer unit; GMU 290 Desert. I would like to share a comparison with you at our Ellensburg meeting.

JOE MURRAY:

- Increased advertising
  - Repeal initiative outlawing the use of dogs for hunting some species, especially where this is needed for wildlife management.
  - PLWMAs could be a part of the hunter education program providing greater hunter exposure.
- Establish a user group advisory committee.

READE BROWN:

The PLWMA operators probably should address this but I believe it is important since it appears the general public's perception of PLWMAs is that they cater to the well-healed sportsman and shuts out the less affluent.

KEN RAEDEKE:

No response.

MARTIN KEILWITZ:

This is a question for the existing PLWMA owners, but the obvious answers should be, to run a easy program that is not too expensive and has hunting and watchable wildlife, scenery or other recreational opportunities.

FRED ZITERKOPF:

No response.

CLIFF BARBRE:

As PLWMAs are established and expanded, the number of deer available will increase. Except, possibly, the trophy bucks, the fees could be reduced for the ordinary deer hunter to increase the attraction to hunt.

Season adjustments have already been tried, but on a larger scale might work even better.

Coordination by PLWMAs for alternating seasons could work to be a benefit for users.

MAKAH TRIBE:

Not pertinent to tribal hunting, Tribes already have the right to hunt on open and unclaimed lands. Industrial timberlands are consistent with the purpose of hunting and should provide for individual tribal hunting needs within the framework of meeting stated goals and objectives for particular GMUs as determined through co-management with WDFW.

## **9) SHOULD THERE BE A MECHANISM FOR FUNDING A PLWMA PROGRAM? WHAT ARE SOME SUGGESTED FUNDING MECHANISMS?**

ANGELA STRINGER:

There definitely needs to be a way to fund WDFW time/resources for assisting with start up needs for new programs, and for management oversight of existing programs. Other costs (e.g. security/enforcement) will continue to be a balance of landowner and WDFW funding depending on the realities of enforcement needs for specific programs and of WDFW personnel allocation. The most logical funding mechanism is a modest annual fee to the landowner to cover WDFW FTE time. As more landowners join the program, WDFW could also consider a variable fee scale depending on the types of services that WDFW and the landowner agree to have WDFW provide. This may be especially important for smaller landowners that may not have the resources/infrastructure to deal with signage, gate construction/maintenance, security/enforcement, habitat enhancement projects, etc.

BRUCE SMITH:

I would like to see WDFW make a commitment to the PLWMA program similar to the other states. It is my opinion that they have made the policy call that the wildlife and recreational benefits of a PLWMA program exceed the administrative costs. We at PLWMA 201 see the need for WDFW staff to meet twice annually; first, to evaluate the year's work (did we do what we said we were going to do?) and an annual meeting to discuss PLWMA operations and set the following year's seasons. The department should take to heart what we heard from the other states. Consolidate landowner programs (Upland Wildlife Restoration, Road Management and

PLWMA) in a single area (I would suggest the Lands program). Look at existing federal dollars to fund the program.

JOE MURRAY:

Funding the PLWMA program is the primary question, however we should focus on funding for the various components of the program. For example, increased participation by WDFW for both management and enforcement activities will likely require some form of funding through the legislature. Funding for landowner costs and profit can be achieved by allowing sufficient versatility in the program to pay for these expenses.

READE BROWN:

The answer to the first question is YES. For the second, the ideal funding mechanism would be a revision in the tax code that granted the landowner a break in taxes for meeting certain established criteria for managing his property in a manner that would benefit wildlife habitat and provide public access. In today's climate such a proposal is probably just a pipe dream that would stir up a hornets nest and have no more chance of being adopted than when the Department tried it more than 30 years ago. On the other hand, the current practice is putting the entire cost of the program on the shoulders of property owners. This leaves them about the only option of going to the wealthy sportsmen to recoup their costs and limits participation to these favored few, even though improved wildlife habitat and populations can be beneficial to a broad segment of the general public

The PLWMA operators probably should address this but I believe it is important since it appears the general public's perception of PLWMAs is that they cater to the well-healed sportsman and shuts out the less affluent.

KEN RAEDEKE:

If the program is to be successful (e.g., expanded in scope and participation) additional staff efforts by WDFW will be required. This will require programmatic funding, either reallocation of existing departmental funding, or generation of new funds dedicated to this task.

MARTIN KEILWITZ:

Yes. License fees, access sticker permits, wildlife fund, grants, donations and property tax and timber tax credits, are Ideas worth looking at. Whatever we do I hope we do not create a monster like exists in some of the other states; I would rather end up with nothing than to be in the same boat with the hunters in other states. There, only the wealthy get to hunt any more and the average deer hunts run \$700 to \$1000 and Elk Run up to \$10,000 to \$15,000 with cows running less. We should be careful what we wish for, we just might get it, for once it starts it soon eats up all viable hunting areas.

FRED ZITERKOPF:

No response.

CLIFF BARBRE:

If managed right, the programs should be self-supporting. Harvest of the deer would be the main payback and as the program grows so should be the ability to self-support.

MAKAH TRIBE:

No tribal comment.

## **10) ARE THE THREE TRIAL PLWMA COOPERATORS SATISFIED WITH THE CURRENT PROGRAM? (Assigned to PLWMA cooperators)**

ANGELA STRINGER:

PLWMA 401: We are fairly satisfied with the program. The PLWMA program fits well with our Fee Access program and it provides us with options to generate sufficient revenue to justify continuing both programs. The current structure of the PLWMA allows us to be flexible and creative in developing habitat enhancement projects and improving recreational opportunities, especially big game season management. We are able to make a modest profit under the current program while providing a fairly low-cost opportunity for year-round recreation.

BRUCE SMITH:

With some modifications like those identified in Point 5 above, the PLWMA program has a real chance to make a positive impact on wildlife and wildlife-oriented recreation in Washington.

JOE MURRAY:

Merrill & Ring is partially satisfied with their PLWMA 600 program. The program provides a proactive management strategy, which has improved relations with various user groups and WDFW. In addition, PLWMA goals can be established which take into consideration the needs of wildlife and the overall management policies of the landowner.

The current program is well suited for our Pysht Tree Farm and it allows us to establish hunting seasons based on trends in wildlife population dynamics. We have considered including some of our other lands in the program, however the costs would be prohibitive as the PLWMA is currently organized. The primary problem is the lack of financial viability

READE BROWN:

The rest of our team is waiting for the cooperators to draft some language that provides this evaluation. The three cooperators may want to talk and decide on a common format or, if you want, how to build one report. However you proceed, we are relying upon you to provide this in an effective and efficient manner for us to simply incorporate in our final report.

KEN RAEDEKE:

No response.

MARTIN KEILWITZ:

No response.

FRED ZITERKOPF:

No response.

CLIFF BARBRE:

No response.

MAKAH TRIBE:

No response

## **11) ARE THE USERS OF THE PLWMA'S SATISFIED WITH THE PRODUCTS OF THE PROGRAM? (Assigned to WDFW)**

READE BROWN:

(Questionnaire Needs?) As George points out such a survey would be expensive and time consuming. I concur with the comments of Brad Johnson. It would be almost impossible to obtain any meaningful information from the landowner segment of the survey because of the wide diversity of operators and the relatively small number that would have any familiarity with PLWMA programs. The same could be said for the general hunter survey. Not enough of them would be sufficiently knowledgeable about the program to provide any meaningful comments. This leaves only the survey of PLWMA program users and I think we could assume that most of

their comments would be favorable or they wouldn't be there. However, this group could provide some legitimate, albeit biased, thoughts and ideas about the programs. To help balance this bias the survey could be expanded as it was in 1994 with PLWMA 201, to include those reporting hunting in the game management units surrounding the PLWMAs.

KEN RAEDEKE:

No response.

MARTIN KEILWITZ:

No response.

FRED ZITERKOPF:

No response.

CLIFF BARBRE:

I am really interested in the WDFW's answer to this question. I think they should express the department's view on PLWMAs, not just their view of the users.

MAKAH TRIBE:

No response

## **12. OTHER THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS.**

READE BROWN:

When I retired from the Department of F&W more than 20 years ago, the Department owned or controlled about one million acres of land in the state. I'm sure that figure has grown considerably since that time. During my 33 years with the Department I saw various plans for managing these lands, some good, some bad, but I never saw a program as comprehensive as the one developed for PLWMA 201. During much of this 50-year period the Departments philosophy in managing our land has been to let it sit idle and let nature take its course. In some cases this worked and in many it has not. Perhaps if the Department had more of their lands that were providing maximum wildlife habitat benefits it would serve as an incentive to private landowners to follow suit. Maybe they should hire Mr. Stevens, give him a crew, and put him to work on Department lands.

MARTIN KEILWITZ:

We have been charged with a difficult task to accomplish in a very short period of time. I believe one way to deal with this is to break it into parts, keep it simple and come to conclusions about the parts before attempting to come to final recommendations. The following paper is an effort on my part to approach the problem from a recreational user, hunter point of view.

### Objectives

The overwhelming message I came away with at the March 28<sup>th</sup> meeting was to set the objectives first. This concept was stressed over and over. Therefore, I shall use my own freedom of thought to put forth some objectives.

1. Develop a simple plan that would provide maximum hunter and other recreational user access to private lands, both now and in the future
2. Develop a plan that assists landowners in providing habitat for wildlife
3. Develop a plan that creates user respect for the land and for the privilege of being on and using the land.
4. Develop a plan that can be funded and is affordable to the user, the landowner, and the State,

Applying Objectives when trying to apply these objectives it becomes quite clear that:

- The Utah, Colorado, plans do not meet objectives,
- The Montana block management plan comes close, but requires too high a budget with Washington's funding potential.
- Washington's current PLWMA program is modeled on Colorado's Ranching for wildlife program, and does not meet the Objectives.
- The Wyoming "Private Lands Public Access Program" Does seem to meet most objectives and could be used in Washington.

#### Looking at the Wyoming programs

1. The walk in part of the Wyoming program is very similar to our Upland Wildlife Restoration access program. It could made to be responsible for all small land units. All that would be needed additional funding, perhaps a name change and to expand the program to include all hunting and other recreational opportunities. It could also be assigned the task of buying, or securing easements to landlocked public lands which mainly are blocked by tracts of small private lands,
2. The Hunter Management Area Program meets the objectives and by splitting off the acreage problems, could be managed for large individual ownership tracts or corporate ownership units. This program would lend itself to and fit nicely with the timber management ownership units. The additional benefit of this program is that in Wyoming it is done on a very low budget with the incentives being mainly service.
3. Incentives "*The incentives should be enough to do the job*" (Kaush Arha) Wyoming does the job mainly with service.
  - What struck me was the comment that there is no way any state could compete with developers or pay for land use except by providing service.
  - Market based incentives are not popular or desirable in Washington. They may even be unlawful if tested in court. (There is a constitutional issue) also a legislative issue.
  - Habitat enhancement projects should be encouraged but not be made mandatory. They should be encouraged with financial and technical assistance, and with grants or some matching fund money if possible but landowners have enough mandated advice from government already.
  - Financial incentives can be up front but mainly by back door with savings on less, gate management, less security costs, less insurance expense, less cost for damage, vandalism, and dumping clean up, and other user created expenses.
  - The level of incentives should be based on user participation. This means an open gate open season; camping permitted unit with high use should receive more of the available incentives than a limited entry walk in unit with low use. A high level of use would indicate a more successful and desirable landowner program and be rewarded accordingly

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Expand the upland Wildlife Restoration access program to include all small unit access areas.
2. Develop a Hunter Management Area program using Wyoming's program as a guide for the large land units that wish to be included.
3. Give the current PLWMA trial program owners the option of continuing their program under existing guidelines or to modify their program to either of the two new programs.
4. Develop funding options and projections to find out just what we can afford to do, and how to fund it.

Thank you for taking the time to read the outline of my ideas, I hope they will be used to go forward with something that will be good for the landowners and the hunters and also be

something we can afford to do. These ideas are in a different direction than we as a committee has been ask to go but I feel there are much better programs than our existing PLWMA's, which is the only thing that we have been allowed to deal with up to date. Time is short, why tinker with something that has not worked well and does not meet the objectives. It also does not work well with the large timber companies that own most of the large land units and which block and contain much of the state land. We only have two meetings left to make some decisions, why spend time trying to fix a flawed program or reinvent the wheel when acceptable ones are already available.

FRED ZITERKOPF:

My comments are based on my belief the PLWMA program that was field tested in 3 locations is a form of beta testing without real measurable criteria or standards, which we could have used to determine if goals, objectives or expectations are being met. Our evaluations are being based on two simple criteria. 1-Was habitat improved, developed, or created? 2-Was hunter access improved? Considering all three areas had either limited access or no access prior to the program then the simple answer is yes, access was improved. But, is it a meaningful increase?

As for habitat enhancement, Buckrun has done that. But did the habitat increase herd size or just become a refuge for much of the existing herd? In the forest acres, did habitat improvements increase herd size? I don't believe we have data to answer. Likewise, did the forest areas provide meaningful increase in hunter access? My inputs to the questions are all qualified by my belief we don't have solid measurement basis for the evaluation. The program also fails to cover the big issue of upland game habitat and access here in eastern Wash. It is just as big as the big game concern. Alternatives to the PLWMA need to be addressed. Unfortunately, right now we are focused on the current program.

BRUCE SMITH:

Fred:

I enjoyed reading your response to the questions. I would like to make a couple of observations: PLWMA 201 had the benefit of years of harvest and population statistics prepared by old Game, then Wildlife and now, Fish and Wildlife. Surveys of GMU 272 confirmed what we saw on the ground. The agency estimated the deer population at .8-deer/sq. mi. That was consistent with the numbers we estimated on the ranch around 1985 (50 deer). Food plots were used to initially attract and increase goose numbers. What happened was that deer started using those same food plots. Cattle and fences were removed to encourage deer use. The first PLWMA plan in 1992 actually set targets for deer numbers, for example, 30 mature bucks and a total population not to exceed 1350 deer. We can demonstrate and quantify the increases that have resulted from the PLWMA operation. A variety of general public buck options have been initiated over the years, ranging from a youth "Trophy" hunt to 3pt., 2pt, spike or antlerless for the state permittees. The STATE dropped the buck opportunity because it was inconsistent with the state's 3-point minimum strategy. The general public lost buck opportunity because herd biology was not used to justify the harvest regime.

This notion of a refuge being created by the PLWMA is interesting. The majority of deer (approximately 2/3) show up after November 10th. This correlates to the rut, but those same deer have already experienced the general state season and only move on to the PLWMA as winter approaches. It should also be noted that PLWMA 201 surrounds the Stratford Game Reserve( the

oldest in the state). If deer hunting was limited by some refuge effect, it should have been occurring historically and our hunting operation should be impacted as well. Not only is hunting prohibited on a game reserve, but no guns, dogs or traps are allowed by statute.

Now to a pheasant program. The real incentives for PLWMAs involve season length, timing and the opportunity to raffle. WDFW has handled game birds far differently from big game. Seasons are already generous (pheasant season lasts nearly 2 1/2 months). But in response to demand for more opportunity the Commission codified rules for shooting preserves. Even longer seasons, planted birds, no license and larger ranches like the Miller's south of Cheney found that they could control not only the bird hunting, but also all hunting on their private property. Let's face it, when Dez Young takes Hank and Dash out hunting, he needs a guaranteed place to go and be successful. After all, hunting access without wildlife is just exercise. Montana has approximately 10% of their private lands enrolled in Block Management. In Washington we have approximately 15% enrolled and we don't make direct payments to landowners. We have also seen pheasant harvest plummet. One reason, the focus was on access and not habitat. The other reason, in my view, was that the policy decision was made to tie up the money in salaries and benefits and there wasn't sufficient operational money for meaningful wildlife enhancement.

Finally, increasing fees is counter-intuitive. If your not selling enough licenses, do you raise the price? Let's see what the real costs are and if they can be reduced. I still think that the level of administration of the PLWMA program is disproportionate to any potential impact (good or bad). WDFW has an annual budget of over \$132 million. There is nothing in there to cover a four-person team to work with PLWMAs a couple of days a year? It is still a question of priority at the end of the day.

## APPENDIX C. Landowner Services Program Proposal

**Submitted by Brad Johnson and Bruce Smith**

**WDFW Wildlife Program**  
**XXXX Division**  
**Landowner Services Program**  
Section Manager: TBD

[illegible]

## I. Private Land Partnerships “PLP”:

Flexible requirements: size, habitat, access  
Increased season length; based on simple, standardized criteria  
Flexible incentives for cooperatives with adjoining Landowners

Deer and Elk ~REVISED~

## Replaces PLWMA Program

Commission pre-authorized landowner permits: Can be sold, raffled, auctioned, or are discretionarily allocated  
Landowner coordinated Free Access Hunts in exchange for habitat work  
Coordinate with Advanced Hunter Education (AHE) and Go Play Outside (GPO) programs

Upland Birds: turkey; pheasant, partridge, quail ~NEW~

Wildlife Management Plans required  
Sanctuary areas required  
Increased bag limits; based on simple, standardized criteria  
Landowner coordinated Free Access Hunts in exchange for habitat work  
Coordinate with AHE and GPO programs

Traditional Shooting Preserve: ~NO CHANGE~

- Planted birds: pheasant, partridge, quail
- No wildlife management plan required
- Payment to WDFW for existing wild birds
- Planted bird requirements: 1 per acre per year
- No sanctuary areas required
- No bag limits
- No free Access Hunts required

[illegible]

- Flexible requirements: size, habitat, and access
- Any game species can be selected for the program
- Standard public seasons, tags and limits
- Improve wild bird habitat with sanctuary areas
- Technical assistance, habitat oriented focus
- Improved incentives over old UWRP:
  - Signage and patrolling assistance
  - Habitat development assistance
  - Flexible incentives for cooperatives with adjoining Landowners
  - Food plot cost shares.
  - Road and weed maintenance assistance
  - Wildlife Management Plan development funding
  - Preserve and enhance liability insurance limits for free access
  - Feel Free to Hunt, Register to Hunt, Hunting by Written Permission
  - Allowable percentage of fee hunting (Hunting by Written Permission)
    - Accountability and auditing required
    - Coordinate with AHE and GPO programs

[illegible]

WDFW Staff requirements: *Local, district bios identify a need and with Enforcement, negotiate a road closure agreement. Section Manager's role would involve ensuring that signs/gates or other supplies are available and ensuring review of any potential agreements for consistency and wildlife benefit.*